

Chapter 14 - Relocation - Draft 7

Relocation

The intent of the Relocation section of the Design Review Guidelines is to ensure that property owners consider the effect that relocation of a building into or out of a neighborhood will have on the neighborhood. The effect that relocation will have on the historic significance of the building is also a consideration.

Because of the continuing restoration and development activities by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the City, Williamsburg has experienced an unusual amount of relocation activity. Non-colonial buildings have been moved out of the Historic Area, and transplanted colonial buildings have been moved into and out of the Historic Area and around the City. While this activity has saved many older buildings, juggling buildings has altered historical relationships in many of the neighborhoods.

Before the City issues any relocation permits for buildings moving either within, into, or out of Architectural Preservation Districts, the Architectural Review Board's approval is required. At the time of submittal of the application for relocation, if the building is listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter 4) the applicant should submit interior and exterior photographs of the building and its original site as part of the application. The property owner has the option to allow the City access to the property for photographic reporting. It is recommended that the applicant contacts the Planning Department for available information on the property to avoid duplicate reporting.

Many factors need to be weighed by the Architectural Review Board when reviewing requests for relocation in Architectural

Preservation Districts, some of which are listed in Section 21-855(c) of the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 16, Appendix 5). These factors include:

1. The historical and architectural significance of the building;
2. Whether or not the building is listing on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter 4);
3. The effect that the relocation will have on the surrounding neighborhood;
4. The type and quality of the project that will replace the building;
5. The Comprehensive Plan's goals for historic preservation;
6. The condition of the building; and
7. The economic feasibility of restoring the building.

The Board must strike the proper balance between preserving a building that makes important contributions to the history and character of the City and allowing for new development in the Architectural Preservation Districts.

Considerations

The location of the building plays a key role in determining its historical significance. When a building is moved from its site, an important aspect of the building's identity is lost. The building's orientation in the community, its relationship with neighboring buildings and community features, and the characteristics of the site all play an important role in understanding the history of the building and previous occupants. When a building is separated from its site, the opportunity for archaeological and botanical research is lost. Relocation jeopardizes older buildings' historic integrity, depletes the historic fabric of the original neighborhood, and

Chapter 14 - Relocation - Draft 7

may confuse the receiving neighborhood's environs. The relocation of buildings listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter 4) should only be considered as a last resort before demolition.

Because of the past and continuing threat to the stock of non-colonial historic buildings in Williamsburg, relocations from significant neighborhood groupings are strongly discouraged. In most cases, these buildings can be preserved and maintained in their original locations. However, if an earlier relocation project moved the building to the present site after 1927 (as part of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's restoration work and the City's redevelopment efforts), relocation of the building from its present site might not be necessary to preserve its remaining historic character. Preservation efforts should include conservation of natural features, identified archaeological features, and secondary outbuildings present on the site, in addition to the principal architectural structure.

Before submitting a proposal for relocation of a building listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Chapter 4), property owners should carefully analyze the situation and explore alternatives to relocation. Property owners should consider the potential of the building for rehabilitation. Many older buildings are suitable for adaptive reuse projects, and the Rehabilitation section of the Design Review Guidelines outlines the process. The Architectural Review Board may make recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals for exceptions to standard yard requirements, off-street parking requirements, and open space and landscape requirements for significant buildings in older neighborhoods, which do not meet current

zoning requirements.

If relocation is determined to be necessary as the best means of preserving the building, careful consideration should be given to selecting a suitable site. In addition, if the building is listed on either the State or National Register, the owner should contact the Department of Historic Resources before the move to request that the designation be retained. Usually, however, relocation will result in the removal of the designation. An attempt should be made to locate a new site, that recreates as nearly as possible the original site's orientation. If the site is too small or oriented inappropriately with neighboring features and buildings, the qualities, which made the building significant may be lost. In addition, if the building is located among buildings of different architectural period or in a district composed of a different land use, the relocated building may look displaced. It is suggested that relocated buildings be placed in neighborhoods with buildings of similar size and land use.

When moving a building, the property owner should hire a qualified structural mover experienced in moving historic buildings and contact the Planning Department for information on building permits and code compliance. Thorough planning and preparation will help to reduce costs and remove opportunities for unseen obstacles to slow the relocation process. Whenever possible, buildings should be moved intact, but if partial disassembly is necessary, all disassembled parts should be labeled precisely to aid in re-assembly. If the moving route is planned to avoid narrow bridges, steep roads, low utility wires, and tree limbs, disassembly may be avoided. During the relocation, measures should be taken to protect vegetation and adjacent buildings on the old and new sites.

Chapter 14 - Relocation - Draft 7

Any further changes to a building moved into Architectural Preservation Districts will be subject to review by the Architectural Review Board. To reduce the confusion that relocation may create, interpretative information about the building at the old site should be posted at the new site.